other hand, since some time before the Christian era and possibly from the remote period when literature first began to be written, most of that which has been regarded as of high quality has differed markedly in style from ordinary conversation.

The original relationships of the Chinese spoken language are still somewhat doubtful. Chinese is often regarded as one of a group of which Siamese, Tibetan, and Burmese are other important representatives. For example, Siamese belongs to the Tai languages and at least one distinguished authority has declared proto-Tai to be the most archaic known form of Chinese. However, to-day Chinese differs so much from these other tongues that if it was ever identical or nearly identical with them the separation must have occurred very long ago.

The history of the Chinese spoken language cannot be clearly traced, partly because of the fact that during much of its course, due to differences between the usual written and spoken forms, it was not reduced to writing. However, it is possible to amass a good deal of evidence giving either clues or exact information about it in various stages of its existence. Thus, some of the dialects now spoken in the South are usually regarded as being more archaic than those in the North. The Japanese, too*, have taken over many words from the Chinese. There were periods when this borrowing was on a much larger scale than at others. Chinese entered by various routes, so that the two major forms in which its pronunciation survives represent chronological and regional variations. Japanese is fundamentally different from Chinese, and Chinese words were modified when spoken with the inevitable Japanese accent. However, the

alterations are often detectable. Korean and Annamese, too, borrowed wholesale from Chinese and are of help to the philologist who wishes to reconstruct earlier stages of the colloquial. Moreover, the Chinese sometimes wrote in the vernacular. Pre-Sung examples of the colloquial are rare, but we have a few from the T'ang. The rhyming dictionaries, as they are called, give important information. A famous one of these, surviving only in fragments, was composed in the sixth century of our era, and another in the eleventh century. Characters were grouped according to the sounds with which their pronunciations began and ended. By comparison with modern pronunciations of the same characters it is possible in many